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Police respond to a shooting in the Dallas area's Allen Premium Outlets May 6, 2023, in a still image from video. (OSV Newsphoto/ABC affiliate WFAA via Reuters)

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Dallas Bishop Edward Burns addressed the faithful of the diocese "with a heavy heart" late May 6 after at least eight people, including a child, were killed during a mass shooting that afternoon at an outlet mall in Allen, Texas.

"Like all of you, I am deeply troubled by the shooting in the community of Allen and the senseless disregard for life that has occurred in our community," Burns said in a statement. "The Catholic community is in unity and solidarity with the families who have lost loved ones in this tragedy. May God, our Heavenly Father, bring comfort and strength to all affected by this tragic event. We ask God to comfort our community, the victims and their families."

Authorities said a gunman opened fire at the Allen Premium Outlets, a Dallas-area outlet mall, killing eight and wounding at least another seven people before being killed by a police officer who happened to be at the mall.

The Allen Police Department said one of its officers had already responded to the outlet mall on an unrelated call, when the officer heard gunshots shortly after 3:30 p.m. The department said this officer "engaged the suspect and neutralized the threat."

Victims range in age from 5 to 61 years old, authorities said. By midday May 7, authorities said they still had no information as to the shooter's motives.

"We must work for an end to the violence," Burns said in his statement. "We must pray for peace within our communities. And, we must have the courage to stand up to the forces of evil and the culture of death."

President Joe Biden said in a May 7 statement that "eight Americans -- including children -- were killed yesterday in the latest act of gun violence to devastate our nation."

"Jill and I are praying for their families and for others critically injured, and we are grateful to the first responders who acted quickly and courageously to save lives," Biden said, adding he has "directed federal agencies to provide all needed support" to federal, state, and local law enforcement involved in the response."

"Yesterday, an assailant in tactical gear armed with an AR-15 style assault weapon gunned down innocent people in a shopping mall, and not for the first time," Biden said. "Such an attack is too shocking to be so familiar. And yet, American communities have suffered roughly 200 mass shootings already this year, according to leading counts. More than 14,000 of our fellow citizens have lost their lives, credible estimates show. The leading cause of death for American kids is gun violence."

Biden touted the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, legislation he signed into law last year passed by Congress in the wake of a mass shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas. That legislation expanded the background check system for prospective gun buyers under 21 years old, closed a provision known as the "boyfriend loophole," banning domestic abusers from purchasing firearms regardless of their marital status, and funded new investments in mental health resources.

But, Biden said, "we need more action, faster to save lives."

"Once again I ask Congress to send me a bill banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines," he said, adding, "Enacting universal background checks. Requiring safe storage. Ending immunity for gun manufacturers. I will sign it immediately. We need nothing less to keep our streets safe."

Biden ordered flags flown at half-staff as "a mark of respect for the victims of the senseless acts of violence," according to a proclamation issued by the White House.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, wrote on Twitter that he is "grieving with the Allen community," and thanked local police and first responders "and all of those involved in responding to this afternoon's horrific incident."

St. Jude Catholic Church in Allen, Texas, posted on its Facebook page, "Let us pray together for the tragic events that occurred earlier today and all those affected by the devastating loss of life."

"Lord God, Father in heaven, our hearts are broken, and we pray for all impacted by the horrible events that unfolded today in our community," the posted prayer said. "We ask that You comfort all the families dealing with suffering and loss and pray that You give consolation as only You can give. We ask this in the name of Jesus Your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, the Lord."

That prayer was followed by a request for the intercession of Mary and all the saints and the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, which says in part: "Defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil."

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In a statement posted on its website, Allen Premium Outlets said, "We are horrified by today's senseless tragedy and outraged by the violence that continues to plague our country."

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and others affected by this heinous act," the statement said. "We are thankful for the police officer's heroic actions and for the support of all the first responders."

Elsewhere in Texas, another tragedy struck the following day. Authorities said a driver plowed into a group outside a shelter that had been housing migrants in Brownsville near the Texas border May 7, leaving seven people dead as well as others injured. The bus stop is across the street from the Ozanam Center, a shelter that houses migrants.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and others affected by this heinous act," the statement said. "We are thankful for the police officer's heroic actions and for the support of all the first responders."

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